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ABSTRACT

Unless communities create equitable learning environments, many students will be excluded from learning and will not be fully prepared for the workforce of the future. The Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology has developed benchmarks to assure educational equity. Benchmarks are listed for the following areas: (1) school and classroom climate; (2) curriculum; (3) assessment; (4) professional development; (5) management and governance; (6) community outreach; and (7) access to technology. Following the benchmarks listed for each area, a checklist is presented to help educators assess existing educational equity in their own communities. The "Equity Reality Check" asks questions about the same areas. A list of equity resources organizations in Vermont is included. (SLD)

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Equity Benchmarks for Vermont

developed by the Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology

Equity Advisory Committee
1994

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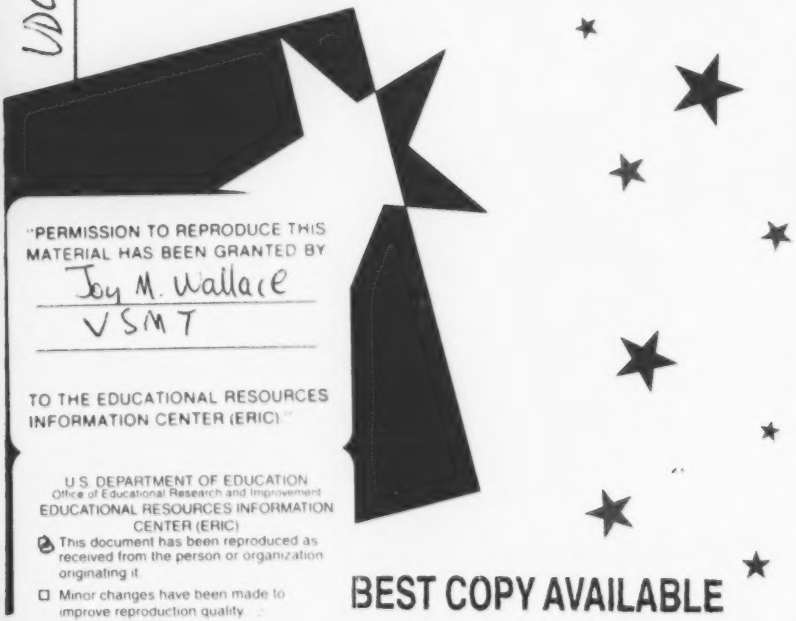

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Equity Benchmarks for Vermont

developed by VISMT Equity Advisory Committee
1994
Joy Wallace, editor

Introduction:

The Equity Advisory Committee for the Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology (VISMT) works with Joy Wallace, VISMT Equity Specialist, as they meet bi-monthly to assist VISMT to develop and implement its equity agenda. Members of this Committee are:

Susan Auld, *Commissioner, VT Dept. of Employment and Training*
Jeff Benay, *Director, Title V Indian Education*
Rep. Patricia Crocker, *PC Communications*
Paul Fassler, *Legal Counsel, VT Dept. of Education*
Steve Halley, *Director, Mt. Elmore Institute*
Bonnie Johnson-Aten, *Washington Co. Youth Service Bureau*
Sara Lee, *Executive Director, Govenor's Commission on Women*
Norman Legge, *Technical Director, Lyndon Institute*
Louise Luring, *American Association of University Women*
Mary Mulloy, *Director, Gender Equity Consultant, VT Dept. of Education*
Noreen O'Conner, *Executive Director, VT Council on Vocational Technical Education*
Brent Sargent, *Asso. Academic Dean, Community College of Vermont*
Lynn Vera, *Coordinator Student Services, Essex Junction Regional Technical Center*

The Equity Advisory Committee developed the *Equity Benchmarks for Vermont* during 1994, and completed them in November 1994.

Part 1– Background:

The VISMT equity goal is to "Promote equal opportunities for learning science, mathematics and technology by removing inequities based on gender, race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, disabilities, and other factors that may affect students' learning and self esteem."

Equity for students is limited when:

- teachers' preconceived notions of students, such as gender roles or socio-economic status roles, determine how they interact and teach students;
- it is only legislated and not lived;
- it is viewed from a narrow perspective, such as in terms of money, as involving only one community or school, or as a separate class or unit.

Equity in education means a quality education for all **learners**, where all learners:

- experience comfort and safety in schools,
- feel accepted by others,
- have respect for others,
- feel invited to learn,
- are connected with the community-at-large, and
- are part of a learning community.

In this equitable learning environment, **teachers**, **administrators**, **students**, **parents**, **community members and school boards**:

- know their biases about people,
- work to counteract their personal biases,
- work together as part of a learning community within schools that supports making changes to increase equity,
- are informed of underrepresented populations in math, science and technology,
- create nurturing learning environments for all students by accommodating students' learning styles, cultural values, ethnic influences, rates of learning, socio-economic influences, etc., and
- are committed to having all students learn and succeed.

Why promote equity?

Unless communities create equitable learning environments, two things will happen. First, many students will be excluded from the sphere of learning and therefore will not be fully prepared to participate in the workforce of the future, nor to lead full lives. This places a heavy financial burden on the existing work force. Second, leaving some students out of the learning process condones acceptance of discrimination and bias, and strengthens the current inequitable system. Consequently, many people are lost to active, full participation in society, AND the current system is allowed to continue limiting the potential of individuals who have been excluded.

Part 2 – Introduction to Benchmarks:

To facilitate the implementation of equitable learning environments in Vermont, the VISMT Equity Advisory Committee developed the following Benchmarks for schools and districts. We realize that these Equity Benchmarks cover a wide range, from specific categories to long-range goals. Our purpose is to provide some guidance in this effort.

Equity Benchmarks for Vermont

School and Classroom Climate

- Every student experiences comfort and safety in school.
- Every student feels accepted by other students and staff.
- Every student respects others.
- Every student feels invited to learn.
- Teachers ask students for feedback about classroom climate.
- Using student feedback, teachers change the classroom environment to increase learning.
- Teachers and students interact with mutual respect.

Curriculum

- Instructional materials are regularly reviewed to promote diversity and eliminate bias.
- Instructional materials are free of bias and represent the social diversity of the United States
- ALL students have access to high quality instructional resources (including books, science and mathematics materials and manipulatives, calculators and computers).
- ALL students have opportunities to perform in algebra, geometry, calculus, physics, biology, chemistry, and other math and science units or courses throughout the grades.
- School libraries include materials about the contributions of racial and ethnic minorities, disabled people and women.

- Library materials and curriculum materials are continuously updated and reviewed to be free of stereotypes and to represent of the social diversity of the United States.
- Course enrollment is not based on ability tracking.
- Classroom climate and teaching strategies provide every student an equitable opportunity to learn.

Assessment

- Methods of student assessment are sensitive to diverse student populations.
- Baseline data is collected and disaggregated by gender, race, ethnicity, disability and economic levels.
- Methods and instruments of student assessment are free of bias.
- Over time, assessment demonstrates significant increase in the rate of achievement of traditionally underrepresented students in mathematics and science.

Professional Development

- Every teacher has access to professional development that helps address diversity issues in classrooms.
- Teachers are supported by school districts to teach diverse populations of students.
- Professional development activities address equity and diversity in the K-12 classroom.
- Equity is infused throughout all professional development activities.

Management and Governance

- Districts have at least one School Board adopted policy that increases equity for students.
- Districts have a plan developed that translates their equity policy into action.
- Policy and plan are disseminated to School Board members, parents, teachers and administrators.
- District hiring policies encourage that teachers and school administrators reflect the diversity of the student population.

- Resources have been allocated to address equity concerns.
- Student and teacher rights are protected.
- Disaggregated baseline data on students are collected and publicly reported.

Community outreach

- Every student is connected with the community-at-large
- Every student is part of a learning community which includes school, community and home.
- Methods for reaching out and involving parents are varied to effectively reach non-reading and non-English speaking parents.
- Outreach activities empower parents to be engaged in their children's education.
- Community partnerships acknowledge that several communities exist within the larger community, and all constituents are represented in leadership and activities
- Schools promote alliances between people of different backgrounds, who represent the several communities that exist within the larger community.
- Collaboratives and coalitions are formed with business partners that include minority-owned business.
- Schools sponsor at least one activity per year to increase public awareness of the need to address inequities.
- All materials developed by schools (newsletter, forms, curriculum materials, letters, awards, etc.) are inclusive and free of stereotyping.

Access to Technology

- All students, teachers and parents have access to technology education, personal development and equipment.
- All students have keyboarding skills, can use word processing to write an essay, and can use education software to learn math and science.
- All principals and superintendents use telecommunications.
- Plans are in place to expand telecommunications access to students.

Part 3 - Where are you?

The following questions are designed to help assess existing educational equity in your school/district. This baseline of information can guide possible efforts, directions, and strategies for meeting the Benchmarks for Equity. In addition to using these questions, we suggest that you:

- Survey students about:
  - classroom and school climate
  - equitable attitudes and respect for others
  - how accessible they see learning opportunities
- Survey teachers about:
  - school climate
  - equitable attitudes and respect for others
  - access to professional development opportunities
- Ask parents if they feel included in the school and to identify more effective ways to increase their access to the school

Equity Reality Check

- **Curriculum and Climate**

____ Every student, at every grade level, uses manipulatives, calculators and computers in mathematics lessons.

____ Every student, at every grade level, uses science apparatus in science lessons

____ My school library has books about the contributions of women in science, math and technology.

____ My school library has books about the contributions of Afro-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans in science, math and technology.

____ My school library has books about contributions to science, math and technology by people with disabilities.

____ My school library continuously updates materials and seeks to replace biased, stereotypic resources.

___ I see evidence in my school of students treating each other with respect.
___ I see evidence in my school of teachers treating every student respectfully as an individual.
___ Science classes are not tracked.
___ Math classes are not tracked.
___ Textbooks, library books and other curriculum materials are all reviewed to ensure they are inclusive, represent diversity and encourage students to participate in learning.
___ My school seeks to update curriculum materials to ensure they are inclusive, represent diversity and encourage students to participate in learning.
___ Math, science, and technology courses are scheduled in ways that encourage student participation, (i.e. scheduling conflicts do not limit enrollment in courses).

• Assessment

___ Teachers use a variety of assessment strategies.
___ Teachers use assessment strategies that are sensitive to diverse student populations.
___ Assessment tools used in my school are unbiased for girls, limited English speaking students, limited income students, etc.
___ Standardized test scores for students at my school show no differences based on gender, income level, disability, race or ethnicity.
___ If standardized test scores DO show differences, my school is demonstrating increases in the rate of achievement for underrepresented groups.

• Professional development

___ My school offers professional development opportunities for teachers that focus on equity issues.
___ Teachers and administrators in my school attend equity-related professional development opportunities.

- **Management and Governance**

___ My district has a policy supporting increased equity for students.
___ My district has a plan that translates our equity policies into action.
___ Equity policies and plans have been disseminated to all school board members.
___ Equity policies and plans have been disseminated to all parents.
___ Equity policies and plans have been disseminated to all teachers.
___ Equity policies and plans have been disseminated to all administrators.
___ My school has a policy statement about how equity relates to curriculum, teaching and learning.
___ All data collected by my district/school is analyzed by gender, race, ethnicity, disability and income.

- **Community outreach**

___ A review of sample outreach materials show that they are inclusive (welcoming all family groupings, translated into languages other than English when appropriate, etc.) and free of stereotyping.
___ Programs such as FAMILY MATH and FAMILY SCIENCE are offered to parents.
___ My school sponsors at least one activity per year designed to increase awareness of the need to recognize and address inequities.
___ All materials developed by my school use inclusive language i.e. do not exclude single parents, do not use generic "he", etc.
___ All materials developed by my school use inclusive graphics.
___ All data collected by my district/school is reported out to the public on a yearly basis analyzed by gender, race, ethnicity, disability and income.

- **Access to technology**

___ Computers are used by all students in science and math.
___ Telecommunications supports learning in my school.
___ All teachers have access to telecommunications in my school.
___ All students have keyboarding skills.
___ Every student can use word processing to write an essay.
___ Every teacher can use word processing to write an essay.
___ The principal and superintendent use telecommunications to link with the VT Dept. of Education and others.

Equity Resources In Vermont

Vermont Department of Education
Mary Mulloy, Gender Equity Consultant
Paul Fassler, Legal Council
120 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05620
802-828-3121 or 828-3131

Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology
Joy Wallace, Equity Specialist
P.O. Box 310
Randolph Center, VT 05061
802-728-4635

Vermont Council on Vocational-Technical Education
Noreen O'Connor, Director
2 Prospect St.
Montpelier, VT 05601
802-223-2550

Vermont Department of Employment and Training
Susan Auld, Director
P.O. Box 488
Montpelier, VT 05601
802-828-4000

Title V, Indian Education
Jeff Benay, Director
Franklin N.W. Supervisory Union
14 First St., Suite 5
Swanton, VT 05488
802-868-4033

Mt. Elmore Institute
Steve Halley, Director
P.O. Box 158
Waterbury, VT 05676
802-244-8708

Governor's Commission on Women
Sara Lee, Director
133 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05633
802-828-2851

Essex Junction Regional Technical Center
Lynn Vera, Coordinator of Student Services
2 Educational Dr.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
802-879-4108

American Association of University Women
Louise Luring, Past President
P.O. Box 444
Saxtons River, VT 05154
802-869-2566

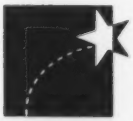
Vermont Girl Scouts Council, Inc.
Mary Harwood, Public Relations
79 Allen Martin Dr.
Essex Junction, VT 05452
800-639-3055

Lyndon Institute
Norman Legge, Technical Director
Box 127
Lyndon Center, VT 05850
802-626-1109

Community College of Vermont
Brent Sargent
Box 120
Waterbury, VT 05676
802-241-3535

Washington County Youth Service Bureau
Bonnie Johnson-Aten
38 Elm St.
Montpelier, VT 05602
802-229-9151

Women in Technology
Amy Emler-Schafer
Vermont Technical College
Randolph Center, VT 05061
802-728-3391



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